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ABSTRACT

A two-phase study was conducted of home economics teachers' use of writing in secondary programs. In the first phase of the study, quantitative data were collected to compare three populations: (1) 125 home economics teachers who had not participated in university workshops on incorporating writing in the classroom; (2) 129 agriculture teachers who had not participated in the workshops; and (3) 125 home economics teachers who had participated in the workshops. A questionnaire was used to identify the extent to which 60 practices related to writing were used in home economics and agriculture classrooms and the importance of 12 reasons teachers may incorporate writing. Significant differences were found between the practices of home economics teachers who had participated in the writing workshops and agriculture teachers who had not participated in the workshops. The second phase of the study used qualitative data collected using the long interview method from 12 of the home economics teachers who had participated in writing workshops. In the final phase, further qualitative data were collected through second interviews and observation of three home economics teachers in their classrooms. Three dominant themes for the inclusion of the writing process emerged: to use writing as a vehicle for students to learn subject matter and make connections between concepts; to improve a student's self-concept; and to vary the methods of instruction. (Appendix contains 11 transparency masters.) (Author/KC)

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF THE WRITING PROCESS IN HOME ECONOMICS USING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS

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Abstract

The preliminary findings of a study of home economics teachers' use of writing in secondary programs are presented. In the first phase of the study, quantitative data were collected to compare three populations: 1) home economics teachers who had not participated in university workshops on incorporating writing in the classroom (N=125), 2) agriculture teachers who had not participated in the workshops (N=129), and 3) home economics teachers who had participated in the workshops (N=125). A questionnaire was used to identify the extent that 60 practices related to writing are used in home economics and agriculture classrooms and the importance of 12 reasons teachers may incorporate writing. Significant differences were found between the practices of home economics teachers who had participated in the writing workshops and agriculture teachers who had not participated in the workshops. The second phase of the study utilized qualitative data collected using the long interview method from 12 of the home economics teachers who had participated in writing workshops. In the final phase, further qualitative data were collected through second interviews and observation of three of the home economics teachers in their classrooms. Three dominant themes for the inclusion of the writing process seemed to emerge: 1) to use writing as a vehicle for learning subject matter and making connections between concepts, 2) to improve a student's self concept and 3) to vary the methods of instruction.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF THE WRITING PROCESS IN HOME ECONOMICS USING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Writing is a powerful tool for learning--a good way to conceptualize, to clarify thinking, and to sharpen cognitive skills, which are goals shared by teachers of nearly every discipline (Beyer, 1982). Recent literature addresses the need to incorporate more writing in all subject areas as a means to better develop the writing skills which studies have shown that American students lack. Writing can be used to promote the development of critical thinking skills. Writing is a visible representation of the world, much different from talking. Writing endures as a record of thinking (Britton, 1970), a display of one's thoughts (Tchudi & Yates, 1983). Through the writing process, students reflect upon their own thinking, evaluate ideas, and relate concepts to daily experiences, as opposed to filling their heads with facts that are quickly forgotten (Fedje & Johnson, 1983).

Applebee found in his 1981 investigation of writing, that students' writing activities were dominated by note-taking and short answer responses. Only 3% of students' class time was spent on writing of at least a paragraph in length.

Content area teachers may avoid using writing because they believe they are not trained to teach writing. Much of writing in content areas, however, is not telling students how to write, but creating situations where they will want to write, using their subject-matter knowledge. When writing is seen primarily

as a product, the teaching of writing is mostly limited to grammar, spelling and style. Writing is **truly** taught only when the focus of instruction is on the process of generating and organizing ideas (Beyer, 1982). Students learn better when they have opportunities to interact with ideas and concepts for deeper understanding.

According to Applebee, very little is known about the writing that school children do . He posed some questions that the researchers believed also were appropriate for research in home economics (See Transparency 1):

*1. Are home economics students writing at all?

2. Are the writing tasks appropriate and productive?

*3. What are the reasons for writing in the classroom?

*4. Does writing instruction vary from teacher to teacher and subject to subject?

5. Do variations in instruction matter? If so, in what ways?

The three research questions which are starred are the ones used for this study. By comparing teachers from two vocational subject matter areas, the researchers could have a better understanding of the current state of affairs and how future inservice education might change teacher practices.

The design of the study was both quantitative and qualitative (See Transparency 2) and it was "layered" as illustrated in the diagram. Quantitative data were collected in the first phase of the study which compared three groups using a

questionnaire adapted from Applebee's study.

Three different Nebraska populations were used for this portion of the study (See Transparency 3):

1. Home economics teachers who had not participated in a University workshop on incorporating writing in the classroom.
2. Agriculture teachers who had not participated in the workshops.
3. Home economics teachers who had participated in the writing workshops.

The questionnaire was designed to identify the extent that writing activities and techniques are used in home economics and agriculture classes, the importance of twelve different reasons teachers may use writing, the extent that 17 different evaluation techniques are used and background information on the teachers and their classes.

Data were analyzed using analysis of variance and followup procedures to determine significant differences among all groups. Time for this presentation does not permit us to provide you with all the data, so we have decided to report only the results of the comparison of agriculture teachers and the home economics teachers who had participated in the workshops. The data revealed the following significant differences (See Transparencies 4, 5, 6).

Agriculture teachers used these activities to a greater extent:

- note-taking during lectures
- circling and correcting mechanical/grammatical errors
- assigning a grade
- using a tape recorder to record comments
- providing opportunity for students to set individual writing goals

Home economics teachers used these activities to a greater extent than agriculture teachers:

- short answer responses
- summarizing
- personal writing/journals
- peer review
- a criteria sheet to correct mechanical errors
- posing questions to help students think further about their work
- commenting on ideas expressed (richness, soundness, clarity, relevance)
- beginning their writing in class so can ask questions and give individual help
- using brainstorming as a prewriting strategy
- modeling writing as students are writing
- posting papers on walls, bulletin boards, or in school publications

Nine of the twelve reasons for writing revealed significant differences in the amount of importance given by agriculture teachers and home economics participants.

Agriculture teachers felt this reason was significantly more important:

-to help students remember important information

Home economics teachers who participated in the workshops felt these reasons were significantly more important:

-to assist students in learning/understanding the concept

-to correlate personal experience with the concept being studied

-to assess whether students have understood the subject matter

-to share creative experiences

-to help student "pull" together main ideas

-to draw closure to material discussed in class

-to allow students to express their personal feelings and ideas

-to clarify what has been learned by applying the concepts to new situations

The second phase of the study (See Transparency 2),utilized qualitative data collected using the long interview method from 12 home economics teachers who participated in at least one university workshop on incorporating writing in the classroom. These teachers were selected as a result of examining the total population available and then selecting what appeared to be a

cross section considering rural/urban settings, school size, class size and teacher experience.

The interviews took place in the teacher's school and included a limited amount of observation. Possible themes seemed to emerge as the data were collected and analyzed. The analysis of this data is continuing and is not considered final.

The final phase of the research included collecting further qualitative data from second interviews and observations of three of the home economics teachers. The selection of these teachers was based on the amount of writing they seemed to use in their classroom, the enthusiasm they seemed to have for using writing and the representation of differing school sizes and the rural/urban situation.

As the researchers investigated this phenomenon, three overall themes for the inclusion of the writing process seemed to develop. Even though the teachers interviewed appeared to use writing for a variety of reasons, one over-riding purpose seemed to emerge as a **dominant** theme for each of the three teachers. This theme or purpose seemed to influence the teacher's philosophy about the purpose of writing and her use of the process in the classroom (See Transparency 7).

The three dominant themes were 1) to use writing as a vehicle for strengthening a student's knowledge of home economics subject matter and make connections between concepts, 2) to improve a student's self concept through the identification and confirmation of their thoughts and feelings, and 3) to provide a

variety of methods of instruction.

All of the teachers seemed to acknowledge the importance of developing student thinking but this goal was tied to one of the dominant themes. These three themes can be illustrated by listening to the teachers' words as they describe their beliefs.

Teacher A stated her belief that writing should be used as a vehicle for learning subject matter (See Transparency 8).

> I really think it improves the way that they learn in general if they are willing to write things down ... student after student says, "Well I could look back and I can see how I've grown ... if I wrote it down, I remembered it." It's not just note taking ... these are the points that [they] need to remember ... every week students write an article of their choice based on something that happened in class that week ... I want something specific that will impart some knowledge to their parents.

Teacher A's actions in her evaluating student work also support this theme.

> ... I am still concentrating on <u>content</u> rather than skill as a writer.
>
> (Her students)
>
> ... do a lot of self evaluation of their work ... expect to write ... (they describe) what happened in foods lab, what was important, what did you learn, what caused this or that ...

Subject matter goals were attained in Teacher A's classes through the successful integration of the writing process. The researchers observed a class of ninth grade students working on autobiographies, an assignment which had been given a month earlier as a "summary" paper during the last weeks of the "Life

Skills" course. Teacher A described the importance of "making connections":

> We're not covering chapters but we're covering ideas ... The one thing I'm working on very hard is trying to connect things ... Like the auto-biography, I see where it ties in to the career unit on self concept, and the personal growth and the family and the care giving ... We've kind of made that an underlying theme for the whole year, to try to make connections.

Teacher A explained how writing had been a part of every unit in the course leading up to this concluding assignment (See Transparency 9):

> Whenever they have a film they do writing; we had a film on generations ... They did the "bake and take" project this year and took baked goods to elderly family members ... and wrote about their experience afterwards ... how they felt about it. We had a speaker on genealogy and family roots and culture ... and they would do writings then. They did interviews of elderly family members ... there are lots of things going on and building on that should now be hopefully reflected in their papers.

The technique of journal writing is done in Teacher A's eighth grade class. Subject matter goals are focused on in this class also.

Teacher A explains:

> I don't very often just say, "Well it's journal writing time and I'd like you to write what ever you want" ... It's usually with respect to a television program series that we're watching. And then after they viewed this ... sometimes I have them write summaries, sometimes I have them select a character and describe that character, sometimes I have them ... draw the comparison between themselves and that character, sometimes I have them choose a theme and write about the theme. There's a tie in of some type to whatever topic we're working with ...

The teacher's own words seem to characterize her belief that she uses writing as a process to strengthen home economics subject matter and to help students make connections between the big ideas on the concepts she teaches in her classes.

A second teacher, Teacher B, seemed to use the improvement of self esteem as the dominant theme for the inclusion of writing in her classes. Many of her students could be classified as "at risk" students. She describes her students ...

> ... a lot of those kids don't even live with their parents, so you know their parents don't even care what they are doing with their life and I don't suppose they care if they are writing.

Teacher B incicates her students need a lot of positive reinforcement:

> The kind of students I work with...have lower motivation, are more apathetic and so they need that reinforcement.
>
> I really emphasize positive feedback because...those I work with are quick to--well, their self esteem is damaged real easily, so they are quick to get defensive. And so we focus on the positive feedback.

Teacher B reported on what a student said to her when summarizing all he had learned in Human Behavior.

> He said that he had learned from doing all of the writing and that he really tried to stuff how bad he felt about having to move from town to town all his life. And that he has tried to just stuff it and put it away and not deal with it and that he discovered that he couldn't do that. That it was something he'd have to live with.

Teacher B then added:

> I think that is what is important that he discovered something important about his feelings and emotional well being. And he had to talk about or write about his feelings...it gives the students a real sense of empowerment when they can realize that they are willing to discover something about themselves.

> One of my main goals is to increase their awareness of themselves.

Teacher C seemed to use writing for a variety of reasons and mostly to vary the teaching method. In Teacher C's words:

> There are so many things you can do.

Teacher C also uses journal writing after guest speakers and other activities. Students write about interviews they conduct and about pie graphs they develop about time management. They have written newspaper articles and "Dear Abby" letters. They summarize articles and write about the main points in an article. They do creative writing based on class discussions. They do futuristic and predictive writings. Her students have written opposing points of view about a particular topic and various kinds of letters, including those about a consumer product.

Further analysis of the data is needed. Many other questions involving writing in home economics need to be addressed in order to learn how to increase teacher's ability and use of the writing process in home economics.

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Appendix

APPLEBEE'S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*1. Are home economics students writing at all?

2. Are the tasks appropriate and productive?

*3. What are the reasons for writing in the classroom?

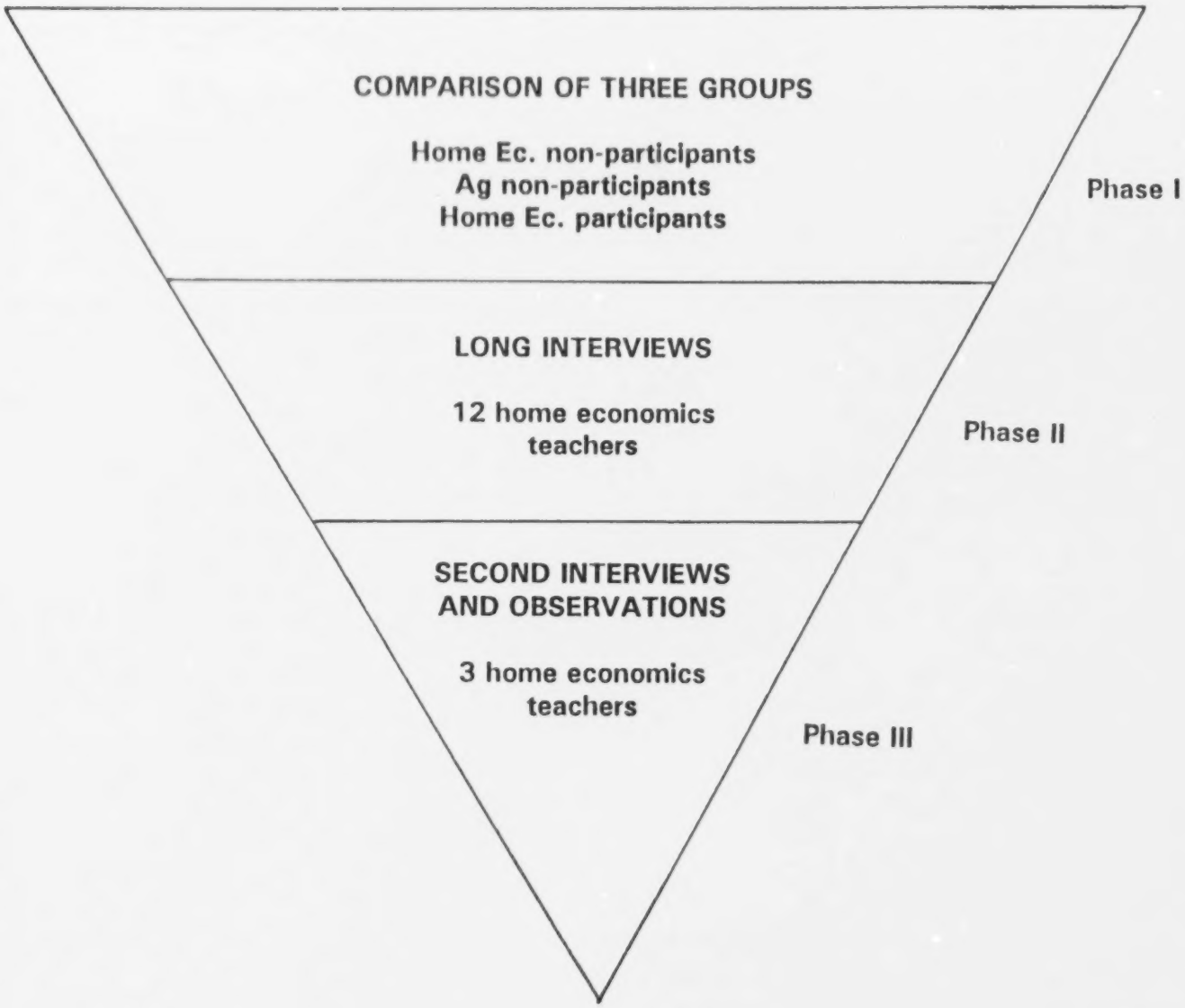
*4. Does writing instruction vary from teacher to teacher and subject to subject?

5. Do variations in instruction matter? If so, in what ways?

* Those research questions addressed by this home economics study

Transparency 2

DESIGN OF STUDY



Transparency 3

PHASE I

POPULATION	N
HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS (N = 383 Non-participants)	77
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS (N = 129 Non-participants)	105
HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS (N = 155 Participants)	104

AGRICULTURE TEACHERS USED THESE ACTIVITIES TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS:

- note-taking during lectures
- circling and correcting mechanical/ grammatical errors
- assigning a grade
- using a tape recorder to record comments
- providing opportunity for students to set individual writing goals

HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS USED THESE ACTIVITIES TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN AGRICULTURE TEACHERS:

-short answer responses

-summarizing

-personal writing/journals

-peer review

-a criteria sheet to correct mechanical errors

-posing questions to help students think further about their work

-commenting on ideas expressed (richness, soundness, clarity, relevance)

-beginning their writing in class so can ask questions and give individual help

-using brainstorming as a prewriting strategy

-modeling writing as students are writing

-posting papers on walls, bulletin boards, or in school publications

AGRICULTURE TEACHERS FELT THIS REASON WAS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOME ECONOMICS PARTICIPANTS:

-to help students remember important information

HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE WORKSHOPS FELT THESE REASONS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN AGRICULTURE TEACHERS FELT THEY WERE:

-to assist student in learning/understanding the concept

-to correlate personal experience with the concept being studied

-to assess whether students have understood the subject matter

-to share creative experiences

-to help student "pull" together main ideas

-to draw closure to material discussed in class

-to allow students to express their personal feelings and ideas

-to clarify what has been learned by applying the concepts to new situations.

DOMINANT THEMES

A. WRITING IS USED AS A VEHICLE FOR LEARNING SUBJECT MATTER AND MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CONCEPTS.

B. WRITING IS USED TO IMPROVE A STUDENT'S SELF CONCEPT.

C. WRITING IS USED TO VARY THE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM.

I REALLY THINK IT IMPROVES THE WAY THAT THEY LEARN IN GENERAL IF THEY ARE WILLING TO WRITE THINGS DOWN... STUDENT AFTER STUDENT SAYS, "WELL I COULD LOOK BACK AND I CAN SEE HOW I'VE GROWN...IF I WROTE IT DOWN, I REMEMBERED IT." IT'S NOT JUST NOTE TAKING...THESE ARE THE POINTS THAT (THEY) NEED TO REMEMBER...EVERY WEEK STUDENTS WRITE AN ARTICLE OF THEIR CHOICE BASED ON SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED IN CLASS THAT WEEK...I WANT SOMETHING SPECIFIC THAT WILL IMPART SOME KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR PARENTS.

...I AM STILL CONCENTRATING ON CONTENT RATHER THAN SKILL AS A WRITER

(HER STUDENTS)

...DO A LOT OF SELF EVALUATION OF THEIR WORK...EXPECT TO WRITE...(THEY DESCRIBE) WHAT HAPPENED IN FOODS LAB, WHAT WAS IMPORTANT, WHAT DID YOU LEARN, WHAT CAUSED THIS OR THAT...

WE'RE NOT COVERING CHAPTERS BUT WE'RE COVERING IDEAS...THE ONE THING I'M WORKING ON VERY HARD IS TRYING TO CONNECT THINGS...LIKE THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY, I SEE WHERE IT TIES IN TO THE CAREER UNIT ON SELF CONCEPT, AND THE PERSONAL GROWTH AND THE FAMILY AND THE CARE GIVING...WE'VE KIND OF MADE THAT AN UNDERLYING THEME FOR THE WHOLE YEAR, TO TRY TO MAKE CONNECTIONS.

WHENEVER THEY HAVE A FILM THEY DO WRITING; WE HAD A FILM ON GENERATIONS...THEY DID THE "BAKE AND TAKE" PROJECT THIS YEAR AND TOOK BAKED GOODS TO ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS...AND WROTE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE AFTERWARDS...HOW THEY FELT ABOUT IT. WE HAVE A SPEAKER ON GENEALOGY AND FAMILY ROOTS AND CULTURE...AND THEY WOULD DO WRITINGS THEN. THEY DID INTERVIEWS OF ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS...THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS GOING ON AND BUILDING ON THAT SHOULD NOW BE HOPEFULLY REFLECTED IN THEIR PAPERS.

I DON'T VERY OFTEN JUST SAY, "WELL IT'S JOURNAL WRITING TIME AND I'D LIKE YOU TO WRITE WHAT EVERY YOU WANT"...IT'S USUALLY WITH RESPECT TO A TELEVISION PROGRAM SERIES THAT WE'RE WATCHING. AND THEN AFTER THEY VIEWED THIS...SOMETIMES I HAVE THEM WRITE SUMMARIES, SOMETIMES I HAVE THEM SELECT A CHARACTER AND DESCRIBE THAT CHARACTER, SOMETIMES I HAVE THEM...DRAW THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THAT CHARACTER, SOMETIMES I HAVE THEM CHOOSE A THEME AND WRITE ABOUT THE THEME. THERE'S A TIE IN OF SOME TYPE TO WHATEVER TOPIC WE'RE WORKING WITH...

...A LOT OF THOSE KIDS DON'T EVEN LIVE WITH THEIR PARENTS, SO YOU KNOW THEIR PARENTS DON'T EVEN CARE WHAT THEY ARE DOING WITH THEIR LIFE AND I DON'T SUPPOSE THEY CARE IF THEY ARE WRITING.

THE KIND OF STUDENTS I WORK WITH...HAVE LOWER MOTIVATION, ARE MORE APATHETIC AND SO THEY NEED THAT REINFORCEMENT.

I REALLY EMPHASIZE POSITIVE FEEDBACK BECAUSE...THOSE I WORK WITH ARE QUICK TO--WELL, THEIR SELF ESTEEM IS DAMAGED REAL EASILY, SO THEY ARE QUICK TO GET DEFENSIVE. AND SO WE FOCUS ON THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

I HAVE LEARNED FROM DOING ALL THIS WRITING THAT I HAVE REALLY TRIED TO STUFF HOW BAD I FEEL ABOUT HAVING TO MOVE FROM TOWN TO TOWN ALL MY LIFE. AND THAT I HAVE TRIED TO JUST STUFF THAT AND PUT IT AWAY AND NOT BE WITH IT AND I DISCOVERED THAT I CAN'T DO THAT. THAT IT IS SOMETHING I HAVE TO LIVE WITH.

I THINK THAT IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT THAT HE DISCOVERED SOMETHING IMPORTANT ABOUT HIS FEELINGS AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING. AND HE HAD TO TALK ABOUT OR WRITE ABOUT HIS FEELINGS...IT GIVES THE STUDENTS A REAL SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT WHEN THEY CAN REALIZE THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO DISCOVER SOMETHING ABOUT THEMSELVES.

ONE OF MY MAIN GOALS IS TO INCREASE THEIR AWARENESS OF THEMSELVES.

Transparency 11

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS YOU CAN DO